

THE R.A.F. to be REORGANISED

Putting the Service on a Basis Suitable for Peace or War

AT an appropriate moment, on the eve of the Royal Air Force Display, comes the news that the constitution of the Royal Air Force is to be put on a new basis.

Following the development of the expansion scheme, the Air Council has reviewed the system of command and administration at present prevailing in Home Commands, and has decided that the time has come to carry out changes which will provide an appropriate organisation for the enlarged Force, and one that will function with speed and efficiency in peace and in war.

One primary feature of the new scheme is that it makes the peace organisation conform as closely as possible with that visualised for war. As training and operations must be separated in war it is essential that the peace organisation should give effect to this separation as far as possible.

The new organisation provides three operational commands and one training command, as follows:—

- (1) *Bomber Command*, which will control the bomber squadrons, organised into a number of Groups.
- (2) *Fighter Command*, which will control the fighter squadrons, the army co-operation squadrons, and the Observer Corps. There will be two Groups of regular fighter squadrons, an army co-operation Group, and a Group for Auxiliary fighter and Auxiliary army co-operation squadrons.
- (3) *Coastal Command* which will control the flying-boat and general reconnaissance squadrons, formed into two Groups. Certain training units have been retained under this Command and will form a separate Group. In addition, this Command will be responsible for the administration and shore training of the squadrons of the Fleet Air Arm.
- (4) *Training Command*, which will, with a few exceptions, control all the training units at home. The Groups under this Command will consist of one for Flying Training Establishments, one for Ground Training Establishments, and one Armament Group. The Superintendent of the Royal Air Force Reserve and Inspector of Civil Schools will also come under this Command.

The air defence of the country has been vested in the Air Defence of Great Britain Command and in the Coastal Command as hitherto constituted. The former of these Commands will disappear in its present form under the new organisation, and the Coastal Command will be reorganised. The air defence of the country will then be vested in the three Operational Commands referred to above.

Close co-ordination between these is, of course, essential, and this co-ordination will be directly exercised, both in peace and in war, by the Air Ministry.

The first appointments to these Commands are as follows:—

Bomber Command.—Air Marshal Sir John M. Steel, K.C.B., K.B.E. C.M.G.

Fighter Command.—Air Marshal Sir Hugh C. T. Dowding, K.C.B., C.M.G.

Coastal Command.—Air Marshal Sir Arthur M. Longmore, K.C.B., D.S.O.

Training Command.—Air Marshal Sir Charles S. Burnett, K.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.

The changes affecting administration are also of a far-reaching nature, the main objects being to provide for decentralisation of administrative duties, for the exercise of fuller powers of responsibility by the various Commanders at Commands, at Groups, and at Stations, and for the reduction to a minimum of the links in the chain of command in order to avoid delays and duplicated effort. This will be achieved by having one administrative link only between stations and the Ministry. Administrative

responsibilities, with the exception of personnel questions, will be centred at Command Headquarters. A new post of Air Officer i/c Administration will be created at each Operational Command Headquarters, and this officer will relieve the Commander-in-Chief of as much administrative work as possible. Commanders-in-Chief will thus be free to devote more time to the strategical, operational and training aspects of their Commands and will be able to visit units more freely.

Each Operational Command Headquarters will have a Senior Air Staff Officer and a small air staff, whose duty it will be to assist the Commander-in-Chief on important operational questions which do not lie within the province of a Group Commander.

The decision to place the administration of personnel in the Group Headquarters, as an exception to the general principle underlying the new scheme, is based on the view that the operational efficiency of units, and consequently of the Group as a whole, depends largely on the discipline and training of the personnel. It is, therefore, necessary for the Group Commander to be directly responsible for these matters.

Decentralisation

In addition to maintaining direct responsibility for personnel administration, each Group Commander will also have a Maintenance Liaison Officer, whose main function will be to keep his Commander in general touch with any major maintenance, supply, works or other administrative problems which may arise and which affect the operational efficiency of units in his Command. This officer will have no executive responsibility.

Stations and units will communicate with Command Headquarters direct on all administrative matters, except that they will report to their Group Commanders on personnel questions. The latter will normally be empowered to deal direct with the Air Ministry on personnel matters when approach to the Ministry is necessary. It is hoped that the devolving of fuller powers upon Commanders of all ranks will relieve the Air Ministry of various administrative responsibilities which it was necessary to centralise during the early years of the Royal Air Force in order to ensure that a common practice and standardised methods were applied throughout the Service, but which can now be safely decentralised.

The new organisation will be brought into force as regards the Bomber, Fighter and Training Commands in July.

Editorial comment on the new scheme appears on pages 665 and 666.

The accompanying table shows the revised organisation in diagrammatic form:—

